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SUBJECT: NAC-PSC MEETING ON THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY SITUATION IN BOSNIA

REF: A) USNATO 599

Classified By: Ambassador Victoria Nuland for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: NATO HQ Sarajevo Commander Major General Richard Wightman (US) and EUFOR Operation Althea Commander Rear Admiral Hans-Jochen Witthauer (Germany) briefed a joint meeting of the North Atlantic Council and EU Political and Security Committee (NAC-PSC) on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on November 26. Both Commanders shared UN High Representative Miroslav Lajcak's assessment of the BiH political situation given at the NAC on November 7 (reftel A), but both commanders said the current political crisis has not had any significant impact on defense reform, or the commitment of the Ministry of Defense/armed forces to national institutions. Both officers expressed confidence in the ability of NATO and EUFOR to monitor events on the ground and to ensure that the political crisis does not escalate. Allies and EU member states were unanimous in their support of the High Representative. Ambassador Nuland remarked that the international community needed to deliver strong messages to Republika Srpska (RS) leader Dodik and strong messages to Belgrade and Moscow not to link final status talks on Kosovo to political developments in BiH. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (C) NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (SYG) welcomed NATO HQ Sarajevo Commander General Wightman and EUFOR Operation Althea Commander Rear Admiral Witthauer by remarking that cooperation between the NATO and EUFOR missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very good. He said that despite the political crisis, BiH is the most forward leaning of the Western Balkans PfP-3 on defense reform. The SYG observed that the Office of the High Representative (OHR) is playing a crucial role in BiH, with the full support of the international community, and NATO would continue to support the OHR and said that the international community should oppose public statements linking final status talks in Kosovo to the political situation in BiH. Portugal's Ambassador to the EU, Carlos Pais, representing the EU Presidency, said that in spite of a difficult political environment in BiH, the security situation remains stable and EUFOR remains credible and visible throughout the country.

¶13. (C) Gen. Wightman said political elements within BiH sought to manipulate the High Representative's October 19 measures for their own political purposes. The political situation was serious because it had been created by the leadership of the RS, and should be seen in the context of the broader political situation in the Western Balkans. Until now, the political crisis has not had any significant

impact on defense reform or on the commitment of the Ministry of Defense or the commitment of Serb officers in the BiH armed forces to national institutions. Defense reform is proceeding at a measured pace in accordance with BiH's PFP program. The national military had adopted NATO's Planning and Review Process (PARP) and is moving forward on engaging in NATO's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP).

Nevertheless, Gen. Wightman said defense reform issues in BiH are not wholly immune from the political environment, as demonstrated by the slower than anticipated transfer to national ownership of defense property still controlled by the RS.

¶4. (C) Admiral Witthauer also agreed there was no sign that political rhetoric threatened instability in the country. Media statements comparing events to the political situation in 1992 were unhelpful and were not based on facts. Bosnia's professional armed forces of only 9000 were unified in eschewing politics. EUFOR receives daily reports from 45 Liaison Observation Teams and the situation within communities throughout Bosnia remains calm. He said EUFOR and NATO HQ staff enjoy strong cooperation under the NATO-EU Framework (Berlin Plus) with NATO and EUFOR sharing a joint headquarters, communications and logistics.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Nuland said this first meeting in ten months between the NAC and the EU PSC Ambassadors was perfectly timed, given the situation in BiH. She said Allies need to support the OHR given the situation in BiH and both NATO and the EU should conduct prudent planning for possible contingencies; the international community should deliver strong messages to Dodik, Belgrade and Moscow; it should be made clear to PM Dodik that while the international community remained committed to RS, the international community (IC) would consider sanctions should Dodik choose to escalate

the current confrontation. The message for Belgrade should be that the IC would hold it accountable for destabilizing acts by the Bosnian Serbs. Moscow should be told there should be no connection between Bosnia and Kosovo and Moscow should use its influence with Dodik to defuse the situation.

¶6. (C) Turkey said it was important for EUFOR and NATO to show unity in BiH and prudent planning between the organizations for any contingency was essential. Turkey also said it was important for EUFOR to maintain a credible force structure in BiH and while reorganization and downsizing of EUFOR may make the force more efficient, it may also create misperceptions and misunderstanding among the Bosnian population. Turkey supported the Mostar Declaration on Police Reform and Turkey said NATO and the EU should categorically deny any political parallels between Kosovo and BiH.

¶7. (C) Hungary, Slovakia, Norway, Estonia and the Czech Republic expressed support for OHR efforts to restructure BiH institutions, including police, and urged NATO and EU unity and prudent planning for any contingency. The Czech Republic noted the recent extension of the EUFOR and NATO mandates in Bosnia and remarked that it is likely that both organizations would need to remain in Bosnia longer than one year. Additionally, the Czechs said that the Peace Implementation Council's decision to aim to close OHR in June 2008 should be reviewed.

¶8. (C) Germany remarked that OHR actions on restructuring BiH institutions are completely in accordance with Dayton. Germany said it hopes the RS and the international community can avoid a showdown as we approach OHR's December 1 deadline for reforming Parliamentary procedures and the Mostar Declaration's December 15 deadline for implementing police reform measures. Canada remarked that Allies should remain united in purpose and message and should hold Belgrade accountable for its actions.

NULAND